

Leura 2nd August 2020

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An acknowledgement of Country

It's a great privilege and joy to live here on land cared for by the Gundungurra and Darug people

We recognise and honour the elders, past, present and emerging of this beautiful country that we call home and upon which we Leura Uniting Church worship and meet.



Christ, Be Our Light - Bernadette Farrell

**1. Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.**

Refrain

Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.

Shine through the darkness.

Christ, be our light!

Shine in your church gathered today.

2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled.

Longing for hope, many despair.

Your word alone has pow'r to save us.

Make us your living voice.

3. Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.

Make us your bread, broken for others,

shared until all are fed.

4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless.

Longing for warmth, many are cold.

Make us your building, sheltering others,

walls made of living stone.

5. Many the gifts, many the people,

many the hearts that yearn to belong.

Let us be servants to one another,

making your kingdom come.

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Opening Prayer

Lord we come before you this morning to thank you for what you have given us and done for us. To worship your glorious creation and actions through our history.

To confess our failure to live up to the standard we know you want from us in our relationships with you and with each other. We meet at this time

to spend time in your presence.

Psalm 145: 8, 9 tells us David came to you proclaiming:

'The Lord is loving and merciful. Slow to become angry and full of constant love. He is good to everyone and has compassion on all he made.'

It is hard to believe this all the time especially at this time in Australia.

I'm sure many of you can think of times past and recent when you didn't think about God in this way. A God who is always Loving, merciful, good to everyone and compassionate.

The droughts, fires, floods, Covid 19, sickness, accident, death, world pandemic, all would make us think otherwise.

Pause and reflect on those feelings and situations and share those feelings with God now.

Notice David in the psalms railed at God for his not appearing to care

Psalm 13 'How long must I endure trouble...'

It is OK to be angry with God. Talk to him honestly now in a time of quiet.

David also in the psalms indicates to us how we should end our times of lament. Focus on the good we know God has done.

What good has God done for people in the world, for people in Australia, for people in your neighbourhood, for your family, for yourself.

I have learnt it is important to have list of these good things. You don't have to think of them when depressed you have your positive list to reflect and meditate on.

Pause and spend time talking to God about these matters now.



My grand son looking pensive on the motorbike. What is he waiting for?? What is he expecting?? Thank you God!

Forgive us for our lack of faith, our lack of trust, our lack of obedience as a people and as your person. Know that when we confess our failure , we are forgiven. **Amen.**

Bible reading Matthew 14:13-21

This story is the only story mentioned in all 4 gospels. Why is it so important?

Each gospel mentions some slight difference in the setting. Why is it so important?

Is it the physical miracle that is important for us all to believe? Is it about Jesus' use of the disciples?

Is it about Jesus demonstrating how to react to the needs of others?

Is it about recognising Jesus duplicating Elisha's miracle proving his Messiahship. Is it demonstrating the magnanimity and abundance of God' answer to our need.

Listen to the story

Denise

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a

desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. ¹⁵ Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” ¹⁶ But Jesus said, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” ¹⁷ They said to him, “We have only five loaves here and two fish.” ¹⁸ And he said, “Bring them here to me.” ¹⁹ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰ And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. ²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

How many times have you heard a sermon or message about this event. I calculate about 50+ times for me. What can I remember about those messages and the meaning given to the story.

Two things stand out. It was treated as a straight out miracle event for us to praise God for his overabundant provision. But how come none of the gospels mention any crowd reaction. Surely there would have been?

It was a miracle of turning people, the crowd, from being selfish unthoughtful to considerate sharing people, who suddenly pulled some food out of their packs to share.

I would like to suggest a few ideas to come from this reading to indicate why this story so important for us today?

☐ The parallels with the feeding of Israel with manna in the wilderness are important. Jews had come to believe that the messiah repeat the manna miracle, so this miraculous feeding is a strong sign affirming Jesus' messiahship. Also it duplicates Elisha's miracle of using barley loaves to feed a crowd of 100 men (2 Kings 4:42ff) also a strong sign affirming Jesus' messiahship claim.

☐ Some scholars note the involvement of the boy in John 6:9, and propose that his generous gesture inspired other members of the crowd to share food which they had brought—with the result that there was plenty for all. Those scholars think that the food was there all the time, and all that was required was a spark to ignite the needed generosity. That is an attractive idea in the sense that it affirms the power of sharing.

However, there are several problems with that interpretation. First, the boy is mentioned in only one of the four Gospels. If his gesture were key to understanding this story, surely the Synoptics would include him in their accounts. Second, this interpretation seems motivated by discomfort with the supernatural. If we explain away the supernatural in the Bible, we aren't left with much. Third, Matthew's account clearly emphasizes the great size of the crowd, the need for great quantities of food, and the great miracle that is required to fill the need.

But attempts to explain this miracle as something less than a supernatural event diminish the story. The real questions are: What do we think of miracles?

What do we think of God?

Do we believe that God intervenes in our world? If God does intervene, is there any reason to believe that Jesus did not provide massive quantities of food to feed this crowd?

☐ "YOU give them something to eat" continues to challenge Christians today. We live in a world full of hungry people and we pray that Jesus might do something.

He responds, “YOU give them something to eat.” The church has often risen to the challenge, providing food, clothing, shelter, and medical care to people in the far corners of the world. We are doing this with Junction 142 and the Open Table. Is this enough?

Jesus had to encourage the disciples to think beyond the problem and the reality.

The disciples could only see the problems. The reality was: it was late in the afternoon. They were in an isolated area. They were all tired. It had been a full day. There was a massive crowd getting restless.

Typically as practical men. They could only conceive of one possible solution. **Buy** food. But Jesus didn't take the bait.

❓ The disciples respond, “**We only have here five loaves and two fish**” (v. 17). The disciples emphasize not what they have, but what they haven't. Not enough money, not enough victuals. They see not possibilities, but problems.

Their assessment is right on the mark.

The disciples have five loaves and two fish—seven items—enough for a small family—but the crowd spreads to the horizon. Not only have they assessed the food supply rightly, but they also have a point in their assessment of Jesus.

He obviously needs someone to confront him—to bring him to his senses—to make him face reality. “Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves food.” Act now, before this situation turns ugly. Send them away. End the day on a positive note, Jesus! End it now!

BUT This story makes us face the fact we have to consider outside the normal reality when we are dealing with God

❓ The disciples were limited by their own expectations. The disciples have added five and two and gotten seven. They need to learn to count to eight. They need to include Jesus in their equation (Bruner, 528). This is an important word for the church today. Most churches struggle just to keep the doors open and the bills paid. How can we

expect to do anything meaningful to relieve world hunger—or Covid 19—or any number of horrendous problems? We say, “We have only seven dollars.” Jesus says, “Bring them here to me.” We, too, need to learn to count to eight and bring the issue to Jesus.

🔗 This story is also a compassion story.



Jesus was in grief according to Matthew. He had just heard about cousin John’s death. Jesus wanted to be alone. That is why he got in a boat and went into the wilderness. BUT The call of God for action is not always at OUR convenience.

Jesus saw the crowd and felt compassion. Compassion leads to action Jesus -begins to heal.

Compassion means you begin to think beyond the immediate need of what you are feeling, doing such as healing, to think beyond to the coming need of food for the children.

Jesus was tired. He had spent the day healing people. Note healing is exhausting work, emotionally, spiritually and physically. The disciples probably wanted Jesus to call it a day. They would appreciate his

mental physical and emotional exhaustion. Send them away.. Don't we often miss the miracle, or the best when we give up too early and pull the pin.

- Jesus uses the disciples. How? Gives them something to do. Tells them You will give them something to eat'

Sit them down on the
grass in groups. Bring me
what you have.

Give this bread out to
everyone. Collect all the
broken left over pieces

Why does Jesus do this? Why does Jesus get the disciples involved?

Questions for discussion:

Do you have an interpretation of this story that is meaningful for you?

What do we think of miracles?

Do we believe that God intervenes in our world?

Hymn **Wellsprings** Don Stewart ATW 435

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Like the woman of old, each day we go to the wellspring of life to find Jesus there

Some day the well seems dry. We can't reach the water- its too hard.

Some days our legs won't take us, our hearts are aching, crying.

Like the woman of old, each day we go to the wellspring of life to find Jesus there

Offering Notices John

Prayers of the People – August 2, 2020

There is a response to our *Prayers of the People* today, based on Psalm 17:6:

*We call on You, for You will answer us,
O God;*

**Response: *Incline your ear to us, hear our
words.***

Let us pray:

Loving God,

We come to You this day, with all we have experienced this week, the joys, the sorrows, the unexpected.

We are grateful for many blessings, for rain that has fallen on the mountains, refreshing our gardens and the bush; we are grateful for family and friends whom we have been able to visit, chat to or exchange greetings with; we are grateful for the beautiful Blue Mountains in which we live – we don't have to go far to drink in their tranquillity and peace. We are grateful for answered prayers.

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But there is sorrow in our hearts as well. We remember especially our friend, Phil Gleitzman, his gentle and cheerful manner and the great contribution he made to our life in the Leura Uniting Church. We are sad to hear of his passing, and we pray for his family and close friends in their sorrow at this time. We pray also for those making the funeral arrangements for Phil, and ask that the comfort and peace that the Service can bring, will not be marred by the challenges faced in this COVID-19 time.

We call on You, for You will answer us, O God;

Response: Incline your ear to us, hear our words.

We pray for members and friends of our church family who are dealing with health issues, recovering from surgery or going through difficult times. We bring before You June and Ron, Mark, Gwen, Gabrielle,

Shirley, Chrysanthe, Betty, Ruth, little Stani, Isabel, and others who are on our hearts and minds at this time....

We praise You and thank You for our Worship leaders, who continue to lead us in Worship in various ways, and we thank You for the continuing ministry and care within our church family. We pray for wisdom for the Church Council as they guide our church through this time. We give thanks for Margaret and Ross, and their team of volunteers as they reach out to the needy each Tuesday in Katoomba through Open Table.

We call on You, for You will answer us, O God;

Response: Incline your ear to us, hear our words.

Our thoughts and prayers are also for our wider world. We pray for those who are infected by the COVID

virus, and for those who have lost loved ones. We thank You for those who daily risk their health to care

for the sick, and for those who carry out the COVID testing, and ask for their protection. We specially pray

for the vulnerable elderly living in nursing homes which have been hit hard by the virus, and for their

anxious loved ones outside.

We pray for those who have lost employment, and those whose businesses have had to close. We are

conscious of those who have been strained to the limit emotionally and mentally, and ask that they will

find the listening ear and the help they need.

We bring before You government leaders and health officials all over the world, daily making difficult and

strategic decisions, hoping to fight or slow the virus infection, and at the same time trying to keep

economies afloat. Please give them wisdom, and help us all to act responsibly, following guide lines and

rules given for the safety and protection of everyone.

We call on You, for You will answer us, O God;

Response: Incline your ear to us, hear our words.

Lord, the fears and uncertainties this pandemic has brought and continues to bring, loom hugely in our minds, but we are mindful also that the problems and stresses and hardships that our pre COVID world faced have not gone away, and have in many cases been made worse by the pandemic.

We pray for those in conflict zones in various places in the world, for people displaced from their homeland, for the many millions of refugees around the world living in overcrowded conditions, with limited access to food, healthcare and basic sanitation, and who are at greater risk of infection. We thank You and pray for aid workers in Africa, Asia and the Philippines who work tirelessly to help to bring health care and food rations to those in need. We pray for a fairer distribution of the world's resources.

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We pray for those who have lost family, homes and livelihoods in recent natural disasters, floods, fires, and storms. We pray for all as they seek to rebuild lives, homes and livelihoods. We call on You, for You will answer us, O God;

Response: Incline your ear to us, hear our words.

And we ask for ourselves. We can become overwhelmed by challenges we face, by fears for our own and our loved ones' safety and protection, by our concerns for what is happening around us and all over the world. Hold us tightly, we pray, give us strength and wisdom and the energy to be Your hands and feet in our community. May we continually feel the peace that only You can give.

We pray together now the prayer that you have given:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

**Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.
Now and for ever, Amen**

The Servant King

Verse 1

**From heav'n You came helpless babe
Enter'd our world Your glory veil'd
Not to be served but to serve
And give Your life that we might live**

Chorus

**This is our God the Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to the Servant King**

Verse 2

**There in the garden of tears
My heavy load He chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn
Yet not my will but Yours He said**

Verse 3

**Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice**

**Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails
Surrendered**

Verse 4

**So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving**

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Graham Kendrick

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Benediction *Let us say together*
A Christmas Blessing

Chorus

May the feet of God walk with you
And God's hand hold you tight
May the eye of God rest on you
And God's ear hear your cry
May the smile of God be for you
And God's breath give you life
May the Child of God grow in you
And God's love bring you home

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